# Security Council

Sixty-second year

*Provisional*

## 5736th meeting

Wednesday, 29 August 2007, 3.40 p.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Gayama | (Congo) |
| *Members*: | Belgium | Mr. Verbeke |
| | China | Mr. Liu Zhenmin |
| | France | Mr. Lacroix |
| | Ghana | Mr. Christian |
| | Indonesia | Mrs. Adiwoso Asmady |
| | Italy | Mr. Mantovani |
| | Panama | Mr. Suescum |
| | Peru | Mr. Chávez |
| | Qatar | Mr. Al-Qahtani |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Dolgov |
| | Slovakia | Mr. Burian |
| | South Africa | Mr. Kumalo |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Sir John Sawers |
| | United States of America | Mr. Wolff |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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07-49288 (E)

*The meeting resumed at 3.40 p.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind all of the speakers, as I indicated at the morning session, that they are requested to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to efficiently carry out its work. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber and to circulate the longer written text.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Mr. Løvald** (Norway): Norway has persistently supported President Mahmoud Abbas in his efforts to foster democracy, stability and peace in the Palestinian territory. Norway supported his decision to form a national unity government, which was meant to break a dangerous impasse and prepare the ground for renewed negotiations with Israel.

We also supported his decision under extremely difficult conditions to declare a state of emergency and appoint a new Government led by Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad. The new Government is committed to the political platform of President Abbas, which reflects the Quartet principles. The platform supports peaceful negotiations as the only viable means to achieving a Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. The new Government has enabled the resumption of political dialogue with Israel and normal relations with the international donor community.

Norway welcomes the willingness of Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas to broach difficult and substantial issues. We urge both leaders to demonstrate leadership and courage in order to bring lasting peace to both their peoples. We — the international community — must support their efforts. At the same time, we should also support Prime Minister Fayyad's efforts to normalize the situation on the ground and to improve living conditions for ordinary Palestinians. This must go hand in hand with the political dialogue with Israel.

Norway believes that, in the long term, comprehensive and lasting peace cannot be achieved through isolating a major popular movement. Palestinian national reconciliation is essential to achieving political stability and to healing divisions. Regardless of how such reconciliation efforts develop, all legitimate structures under President Abbas should be re-established and strengthened. All parallel and illegitimate structures should be dissolved.

The Government of Prime Minister Fayyad faces serious challenges, particularly in the security sector. We condemn rocket attacks on Israel. We reiterate our demand that such attacks must be halted. The Palestinian economy has been crippled by years of conflict and by the Israeli regime of checkpoints and closures. The humanitarian situation remains very difficult, especially for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Isolated and closed off from the outside world, the Gaza Strip could eventually become entirely dependent on foreign aid. Such isolation and destitution will only provide fertile breeding-ground for more extremists.

We welcome the decision of the Government of Israel to transfer withheld Palestinian taxes and revenues, and we urge the Government to continue such transfers on a regular basis. It is also essential that Israel ease restrictions on the movement of persons and on the transfer of goods, and that Israel implements the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. Israel should also take effective measures to halt settlement expansion. Such steps are necessary to build confidence, which, in turn, will facilitate the peace process.

Norway has long called for a regional approach to the peace process. We need broad engagement of countries in the region to follow multiple tracks and to address all issues. We therefore support the determination of the Arab League to revitalize its peace initiative. The Arab-Israeli peace process needs support and engagement on the part of its Arab neighbours. We welcome the announcement by the President of the United States to hold, in November of this year, an international meeting in support of the two-State solution. A strong commitment by the United States is crucial for further progress.

The international community should foster positive developments on the ground in order to support the political dialogue. Norway, in its capacity as Chair of the donor forum — the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestine— has therefore invited AHLC members to meet at the ministerial level here, at the United Nations in New York on 24 September. The September meeting should send a

strong signal to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad that the international community is committed to cooperating with and assisting the Palestinian Authority. The main purpose of the AHLC meeting is to prepare and set the stage for a broad-based international pledging conference in December. The meeting will also provide an opportunity for close cooperation and coordination between the Quartet and the AHLC.

Three major international meetings are planned this autumn to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is a chance for progress and results. Spoilers should not get the upper hand again, and diminish the chance of stability and peace in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Mr. Al-Allaf** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership of the Security Council this month. I would like to thank and commend your predecessor for his prudent management of work in the Council last month. I would also like to thank the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Michael Williams, for his briefing and for his tireless efforts.

Jordan aligns itself with the statements by Yemen, our fraternal country, on behalf of the Arab Group, by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and by Cuba on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Today's meeting is special for two reasons. First, it anticipates the atmosphere of high-level diplomatic activity on the margins of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, and secondly, we view it as part of the international momentum generated through the Arab Peace Initiative and the initiative of the President of the United States, George Bush, for convening an international conference on peace in the Middle East. This meeting thus is a unique opportunity to call upon the international community to intensify its efforts to reactivate the peace process and put it back on the right track.

As we try to establish security and peace worldwide, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Palestinian question remains at the heart of the Middle East conflict. Without a just solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the region would inevitably revert to violence and extremism that would have grave repercussions in the region and elsewhere. Thus, a fair, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region remains our single option.

That option has to be seen in the context of a comprehensive conceptual solution that directly tackles the fundamental final status issues; it should not be limited to dealing with matters of the daily running of the occupied territories. It must have a predetermined and acceptable timetable that can be adhered to, conforms to resolutions of international legitimacy and leads to the creation of an independent, viable and geographically contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Arab Peace Initiative is an historic opportunity to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of this conflict. It provides a good basis for the peace we are striving for. This initiative has established a balanced approach, with concrete ideas and arguments that can be followed through, and it proves beyond doubt the total Arab commitment to reaching a settlement, putting an end to conflict, providing collective security guarantees for all countries in the region, including Israel, and to leading to the establishment of the State of Palestine.

International parties have a pivotal role in moving the peace process forward, and that entails a political and moral responsibility to help settle the conflict in proportion to their international standing and ability to influence international policy. In Jordan, we expect these parties to be a strategic driving force that shapes events, and we expect them to take advantage of the historic opportunity provided by the forthcoming international conference.

In this regard, we would like to reiterate our support for the initiative of United States President George Bush for the holding an international peace conference. We consider it a step in the right direction. We would also like to welcome the positive elements of this initiative, looking into ways to re-launch the Palestinian-Israeli peace process in accordance with the two-State formula and reaching an agreement on final status issues, including those of Jerusalem and the refugees. In the meantime, we emphasize the importance of a work plan and a clear timetable to guarantee that this meeting can be a success and have the potential to launch the political process with clearly defined directions and outcomes.

We also stress the importance of the role of the Quartet in the coming stage, and we attach special importance to the meeting it will hold with the Arab Group on the margins of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Jordan takes this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Mr. Tony Blair as the Quartet's Special Envoy. The Jordanian Government is pleased to express its readiness to work with him in close coordination and cooperation.

Jordan is rather optimistic about the outcome of recent meetings between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. Meanwhile, assent and complete support of Palestinian legitimacy as embodied by the Palestinian Authority and its President, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. We urge the international community to give all necessary aid to President Abbas and the Palestinian people in their efforts to create a democratic political system, strengthen the Palestinian national institutions and make them responsible and transparent, including security institutions, in order to develop good governance so as to meet the aspirations and needs of the Palestinian people and maintain their unity. We also hope that all Palestinian factions will put their house in order and unite, giving priority to the common interests of the Palestinian people.

The link between economy and security is irrefutable; it is an integrated circle. In Jordan, we harbour some concern about the lack of minimum social and economic conditions necessary for a reasonable degree of security, be it in the West Bank or Gaza. As part of the efforts made by Jordan to help improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people, our Government has provided emergency aid, and in the last few days has sent convoys with medicine to Gaza and Jerusalem hospitals, where there is a great shortage of basic drugs and medical supplies.

In particular, we are concerned with the humanitarian situation of the people in Gaza. We call upon the international community to participate by offering support for the Palestinian Authority, giving humanitarian aid to all Palestinians, helping to improve their living conditions, reviving their economy, helping to create an environment favourable for investment, and promoting a free and flourishing economy. Evidently, such measures are no alternative to a political process with real peace negotiations leading to definite political outcomes.

As we approach the convening of an international conference on peace in the Middle East, with hope generated by the Arab Initiative, we feel the need to generate mutual confidence between the parties to the conflict. We call upon the Israeli Government to lift the blockade on the Palestinian people, transfer Palestinian taxes and customs duty, release more Palestinian prisoners and put an end to all practices violating the rights of the Palestinian people, putting an end, furthermore, to all forms of occupation, especially through restriction of movement, security closures and all colonization activity.

Moreover, the Jordanian Government reaffirms its position regarding the illegality of the separation wall, demolition activities, and excavations threatening sacred areas.

The Middle East is moving towards a critical moment. We should all seize this hour of momentum and build on it in our search for peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mrs. Núñez Mordoche** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the Council on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The Non-Aligned Movement has been monitoring recent developments and the continuing deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Movement expresses its grave concern about the dire security, humanitarian, socio-economic and political situation prevailing the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the consequent rise in suffering and hardship that confronts the Palestinian people.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns the prolonged Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territory since 1967 and expresses grave concern over the recent distressing developments. For four decades, Israel, the occupying Power, has been unrelentingly violating international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights norms, in its actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. During this time, the occupying Power has been committing grave human rights violations against the Palestinian people, including, reportedly, war crimes.

Moreover, for four decades the occupying Power has carried out deliberate and unlawful policies and practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and nature of the Palestinian lands and, in fact, at annexing those lands, particularly via the implementation of its illegal colonial settlement policy and, since 2003, the illegal construction of a wall in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem.

In addition, Israel continues to impose a humiliating and discriminatory network of checkpoints throughout the occupied Palestinian territory to impose closures, seal off the Gaza Strip and carry out intense military raids and incursions in Palestinian population centres, causing extensive loss of life and injury to Palestinian civilians and widespread destruction of property.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns all such illegal actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and calls for their immediate cessation. It believes that these illegal Israeli actions, including ongoing military attacks, have seriously undermined the functioning of the Palestinian Authority and have undoubtedly contributed to the growing polarization of Palestinian society.

The Movement also condemns the recent criminal actions in the Gaza Strip and calls for urgent efforts to avoid the complete disintegration of the foundations of a future sovereign, viable and independent State and to rehabilitate and develop Palestinian institutions.

Further, the Movement calls for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the recent events and for the adoption of measures to preserve the territorial unity and integrity of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It stresses the necessity for mobilization of Palestinian capabilities in order to end the occupation and to achieve the Palestinian national goal.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite in support of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and his Government and all democratically elected Palestinian institutions to resolve their political differences by peaceful means. The Movement supports national dialogue among Palestinians to achieve national reconciliation. In this regard, the Movement reaffirms its position that the Palestine Liberation Organization remains the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and remains an essential party to any negotiations aimed at resolving the conflict.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the parties to resume urgently peace process negotiations at all levels on the basis of international law, relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to resolve comprehensively the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. In this regard, the Movement reaffirms its support to all peaceful efforts aimed at ending Israel's 40-year occupation of Palestinian land, the achievement of a final and peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine with the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its continuing and firm support for a peaceful settlement and calls upon the international community to adopt specific positive steps towards this goal.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its satisfaction with the steps undertaken by the Lebanese Government to implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), particularly through the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the region south of the Litani River and along the Blue Line. The Movement also welcomes the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the northern and eastern borders of Lebanon in order to ensure security and stability at the borders.

The Movement remains deeply concerned by the ongoing Israeli air and land violations of the Blue Line in breach of resolution 1701 (2006). We strongly call on Israel to end the occupation of the northern part of al-Ghajar, on the northern side of the Blue Line, to immediately refrain from any violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006) and to refrain from any provocation to the Lebanese Armed Forces or the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

The Movement calls for the prompt settlement of the question of the Shab'a farms with full respect for Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity, as stipulated in resolution 1701 (2006). We call upon all parties to cooperate in protecting Lebanon's sovereign

rights in that area and we take note of the important endeavours of the Secretary-General in that regard.

The Movement is acutely aware of the enormous challenge facing Lebanon resulting from the 1.2 million cluster bomblets launched by Israel during its aggression against Lebanon last summer. The Movement condemns once again the use of such weaponry by Israel and deplores the death toll resulting from them. The Non-Aligned Movement strongly calls upon Israel to provide the exact location of those deadly weapons and the maps of mines planted during its occupation of Southern Lebanon.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms once again that all measures and action taken or to be taken by Israel that purport to modify the legal, physical and demographic condition and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan and the Israeli measures to implement its jurisdiction and administration in that area are null and void and have no legal effect. We also reaffirm that all of these measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of the Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, are a challenge to the international community and a clear violation of international law, international agreements, the Charter and decisions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. The Movement demands that Israel abide by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to support and contribute in all possible aspects to achieving a just, complete and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all of the United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of territory for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mrs. Viotti** (Brazil): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the initiative of convening this meeting, which we find timely and appropriate.

The serious situation in the Middle East requires the constant and dedicated attention of the international community. The events in the occupied Palestinian territories clearly demand renewed efforts by the United Nations and its Member States to find a lasting solution. A comprehensive approach is necessary to simultaneously address the interrelated humanitarian, socio-economic and political aspects of the problem.

Brazil follows with interest the situation in the Middle East. We have traditionally supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people to a free, cohesive, democratic and economically viable State, living side by side with Israel, within internationally recognized borders. The excellent relations that Brazil maintains with both Israel and the Palestinians have moved us to encourage a peaceful solution since the beginning of the conflict, through both multilateral and bilateral means. The creation of an office in Ramallah, our observer status in the League of Arab States, the designation of a Special Envoy to the Middle East and the visits of our Minister of Foreign Affairs and of other senior officials to the region express our interest in raising the level of our dialogue with Palestinian authorities and all interested parties.

The Palestinian population in the West Bank and especially in Gaza is daily subjected to unacceptable deprivation, as too often seen in the reports of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other United Nations agencies. Abating the suffering of the civilian population is not only humane, but also an essential step to paving the way for a successful rekindling of the peace process.

In this context, the reopening of Karni crossing and other access points to Palestinian territories is essential to improving the living conditions of the population in Gaza. Unimpeded connections to other countries and the resumption of international assistance are also necessary for the Palestinian Authority to provide assistance, including water, food and medicine, to the population in distress.

We welcome the release of additional taxes and customs revenues withheld by Israel, which will enable the Palestinian Authority to meet humanitarian needs and other basic expenses. We also welcome the launching of new projects by international donors. However, the improvement of people's daily lives requires much more.

Brazil welcomes the recent talks between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas in Palestinian territory early in August. Those high-

level political talks show commitment and constitute a positive sign towards the resumption of the peace process. We encourage both parties to revitalize the cooperative mechanisms and reinforce confidence-building measures with the implementation of projects that improve the economic and social conditions in the occupied territories.

Measures such as the release of Palestinian prisoners, and that of the Israeli soldier held in Gaza, and the interruption in the construction of settlements could further foster an appropriate atmosphere at this juncture. Promoting the economic and social development of the Palestinian territories is essential to the efforts of establishing a peaceful solution for the region. The rehabilitation of degraded infrastructure, the re-establishment of basic public services and the restoration of the confidence of investors in the Palestinian economy are priorities for ensuring the sustainable development of the Palestinian territories and the livelihood of its population.

For development to be possible, Israel should take the necessary measures to remove roadblocks and checkpoints, allowing people their freedom of movement. Another important step would be the granting of visas to Palestinian workers to find jobs in Israel. Brazil is convinced of the need for qualitative change in the daily lives of the Palestinian people as a precondition for the sustainability of the political process.

Brazil believes that sustained peace can only be achieved with the involvement of all the actors concerned. The resolution of the conflict hinges on respect for legitimately constituted authorities and on refraining from all acts of violence. The conflicts in the Middle East transcend the Israeli-Palestinian situation. They are, in many ways, intertwined. The creation of positive momentum in one area could generate a virtuous circle leading to favourable results in others.

The Brazilian Government favours an expanded debate on the Middle East, in order that other actors can contribute ideas and efforts so as to strengthen the peace process. We therefore encourage the establishment of a group of friends of peace in the Middle East comprised of countries from different regions interested in promoting dialogue and reconciliation, which might join those that are already directly involved in the peace process.

In line with the proposal put forth by President Lula in his address to the General Assembly last year, we welcome President Bush's initiative to hold an international conference on the Middle East. Such an international conference could certainly benefit from the involvement of countries outside the region, including developing countries.

Allow me to say a few words on the Lebanese situation, which we follow with concern.

I would like to express Brazil's support for the Government of Prime Minister Siniora, and to reiterate the right of the Lebanese people to its sovereignty and self-determination, free from any foreign influence in deciding its own future.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

**Mr. Hoang Chi Trung** (Viet Nam): It is a great honour and privilege for me to speak on behalf of the delegation of Viet Nam at this important meeting of the Security Council. I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the able leadership that you and your delegation have demonstrated in the Presidency of the Council this month. I am also very grateful to Mr. Michael Williams for his briefing this morning.

First and foremost, my delegation would like to associate itself fully with the statement delivered moments ago by the representative of the Republic of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

There is no doubt that the Middle East continues to be one of the flash points of great concern to the world community in general, and to the Security Council in particular. We hope that our meeting today will help enable the parties concerned to work much harder to put the peace process in the region back on track.

My country fully shares the view that the Middle East conflict, at the core of which is the question of Palestine, can only be resolved through peaceful negotiations with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution on the basis of the legitimate interests of all the parties concerned. Furthermore, in order to reach such a solution, we strongly believe that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish a Palestinian State in their homeland with the borders as they existed before June 1967, must be fully respected.

In line with that consistent position, Viet Nam supports all regional and international efforts that contribute to advancing the peace process in the Middle East. We urge the parties concerned to make further efforts to revive the Road Map for peace and to make greater contributions to the stability and development of the region. For its part, Viet Nam stands ready to do its utmost to contribute to the resumption of the negotiations among the parties involved in the Middle East peace process.

As far as the internal affairs of the Palestinians are concerned, we wish to reaffirm that Viet Nam respects the choice taken by the Palestinian people themselves and earnestly hopes that the Palestinian parties will make efforts to settle their differences through peaceful negotiations and continue to work hard, with the support of the international community, to further move the peace process in the Middle East forward.

Finally, my delegation wishes to express its serious concerns over the recent escalation of tension and violence in the region. We urge all the parties concerned to restrain themselves and to support peaceful negotiations in order to facilitate the return of normalcy to the region. In that connection, Viet Nam warmly welcomes the recent high-level meetings between Israel and Palestine. We sincerely hope that those meetings will lead to the resumption of peaceful negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh): We deeply appreciate your having convened this important open debate, Mr. President.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as well as with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, given the importance of the issue, we have asked for the floor in order to underscore our position.

Before doing so, however, allow me express my deep appreciation to Special Coordinator Michael Williams for his detailed report to the Security Council this morning, as well as for his tireless efforts in his capacity as Special Coordinator. I would like to take this opportunity to wish him the best in his new role.

Year after year, we have held many debates on the situation in the Middle East, including the occupied Palestinian territories. Many important resolutions have been adopted, some with strict binding mandates, such as those of the Security Council. Yet the impasse continues, with an end nowhere in sight. While we wait in frustration for better times, the escalation of violence and bloodletting and the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands and Israel's brutal suppression of innocent men, women and children in the occupied territories bring further outrage to our conscience. Sadly, the factional infighting and divisions among the Palestinians themselves also add fuel to the fire, negating the prospects for genuine and lasting peace in the region. Nonetheless, we are somewhat encouraged by ongoing attempts to consolidate national unity. We fear that those efforts might be frustrated unless the parties concerned demonstrate real and sincere will to move beyond the status quo.

We remain deeply concerned at the continued killing, arrest and detention of defenceless Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces. We are also dismayed at the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is of particular concern that the planned Israeli blockade on the Gaza strip has brought its economy to the verge of irreversible collapse, thereby triggering a humanitarian disaster of great proportions.

It is unfortunate that Israel is continuing its illegal activities, in total disregard for international sentiments and in contravention of United Nations resolutions aimed at preserving the sanctity of the Holy City of Jerusalem — Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The excavation works below the Holy Al-Aqsa compound is a specific issue that we spoke against at a previous meeting of the Security Council. The ongoing construction of the separation wall, in flagrant disregard of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion, is yet another instance of Israel's deliberate defiance of international will. Such acts obviously do not promote the cause of peace; rather, they set the process back. We would therefore urge determined efforts by the United Nations to bring those illegal activities to an immediate end.

Although there have been many setbacks, my delegation is nevertheless encouraged by some glimmers of hope. We are heartened by the resumption, albeit on a modest scale, of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. We believe that will have a positive bearing on the outcome of the Quartet meeting scheduled for next month and on the United States-led international conference scheduled for November. The Israeli President's proposal to release all Palestinian detainees in exchange for the cessation of all military operations against Israeli targets merits attention. The release of some 250 Palestinian prisoners and of some tax revenues are steps in the right direction.

We recognize that a number of constructive diplomatic initiatives and mediation efforts by the international community are in place to provide fresh impetus to the peace process. Similarly, we believe that the recent Japanese-led initiative aimed at achieving peace through economic development holds good prospects for the peace process in the Middle East. We urge the international community, particularly the developed countries, to come forward with economic development projects to resuscitate the war-ravaged Palestinian economy.

My delegation reaffirms its full support for the legitimate and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing side by side with Israel in peace, security and harmony. We maintain that, if a just and sustainable peace is to take root, Israel must withdraw its forces from all the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and meet all its obligations under the Geneva Conventions, the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and other peace initiatives, including the Road Map drawn up by the Quartet. We urge all parties concerned to return to talks and negotiate a breakthrough in the peace process.

Although there has long been a broad consensus in the international community that the Middle East crisis must be resolved, peace in the region has remained as elusive as ever. Have we lacked the genuine will and determination to translate our words into actions? Or have we failed to meet our collective commitments? Either way, it has been a failure on our part. Yet we should not wring our hands in utter resignation; we must seize every opportunity to bring the peace process back on track. We hope that our deliberations here today will contribute, even if in a very modest way, to the achievement of our long-cherished goal of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Amil** (Pakistan): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the skilful manner in which you have conducted the work of the Security Council during the month of August. Permit me also to congratulate Ambassador Wang and the Chinese delegation on a successful Council presidency last month.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group, on whose behalf this statement is being made, fully endorses the practice of having periodic open debates on the situation in the Middle East so that the Council has a chance to hear the opinions of the larger membership of the United Nations and, it is to be hoped, benefit from the collective wisdom of Member States when it considers the way forward on this most important issue.

On 7 June this year, the United Nations marked 40 years of occupation by Israel of the Arab territories, including the Palestinian territory, East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. On 15 May 2008, the Palestinians will observe the sixtieth anniversary of the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe". It is indeed very unfortunate that, after all this time, our quest for peace in the Holy Lands remains elusive at best.

The OIC remains deeply concerned about the continuing Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the aggressions committed against the peoples of the occupied Arab territories — an occupation that has gone on far too long and has served only to cause agony and anguish. The visible and often brutal suppression of the Palestinian people is also a principal root cause of the rise of extremism across the Muslim world. This political reality, however unpalatable, can no longer be ignored. It is not only the United Nations, but also the entire international community, that should denounce this violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

This year, like most others, has been one of change and unrest in the region. While there have been developments in the region — including the meetings between leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet's agreement to meet again in

September as part of the efforts to provide diplomatic support for the parties in their bilateral discussions and negotiations, in order to move forward on a successful path to a Palestinian State — the continued use of violence by Israel and inter-Palestinian divisions have left the already weary Palestinian population insecure and unsure of the future. It will be our most pressing task to translate those developments into concrete actions aimed at the realization of a comprehensive solution to the many issues of the Middle East, based on all the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is a matter of concern that, despite the developments of the release of 250 Palestinian prisoners and of some tax revenues, the larger problems in the occupied territories remain the same. Settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories persists; the construction of the wall, in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, continues; and roadblocks and checkpoints make everyday life taxing for a population that is already living caged in its own land. We urge the Israeli Government to put an end to the illegal settlement activity and the work on the wall and to halt all work near the sacred Al-Aqsa Masjid.

Whatever one's political perspective, it is clear that there can be no military solution to the issue of the Middle East and that peace can be attained only through a complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all Arab lands, including the Palestinian territories, East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanese lands, and through the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State. In the present atmosphere of quiet tension in the region, it will be the challenge of the United Nations to maintain the efforts to reach a just, fair and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, the United Nations should play a more active role in promoting a durable and comprehensive peace.

The most urgent task is to halt the violence in the occupied territories. While the efforts to secure the release of the captured Israeli soldiers are still ongoing, Israel must also release the remaining Palestinian prisoners and do more to support the Palestinian Authority and to end the economic and humanitarian blockade of the Palestinians. Unfortunately, Israeli actions on key issues such as the outposts, the settlements in the West Bank, the construction of the wall and the hundreds of checkpoints serve only to intensify frustration within the Palestinian population.

Simultaneously, the efforts to promote inter-Palestinian reconciliation should be continued. Policies of division and isolation may prove counterproductive to the cause of peace. In that connection, a step essential to achieving reconciliation is to restore the situation existing on the ground in Gaza today to that which existed prior to the events of June 2007.

The OIC Group strongly urges the resumption of peace talks without prejudice to the positions of either side. Such talks should lead to an early agreement to resume the implementation of the agreed peace plan and the Road Map.

In that regard, we note the initiative to convene an international conference on the issue in Washington in November. It is our fervent hope and prayer that the conference will lead to significant progress in our quest for peace. We should, however, be mindful that the conference can succeed only if it reflects a comprehensive and sincere initiative for peace that returns all Arab territories occupied since June 1967 and is able to address and show concrete movement on the final status issues, namely, final boundaries in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the status of Jerusalem — al-Quds al-Sharif — and the issue of Palestinian refugees and their inherent right to return.

The structure of a durable peace in the Middle East is already well known. To realize a just and durable peace in the Middle East, the United Nations must secure the non-selective implementation of its own resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III). A solution will also have to be based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet's Road Map.

To that end, the Islamabad Declaration and Communiqué issued by the thirty-fourth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which was held in Islamabad from 15 to 17 May 2007, unambiguously resolved to continue its relentless efforts for the cause of peace in the Middle East and welcomed the renewal of the Arab Peace Initiative and the efforts of the President of Pakistan.

Let us hope that next year, when the Palestinians commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the *Nakba*, it will be accompanied by celebrations over the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State, at peace with all its neighbours.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Takasu** (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, an issue of paramount importance to international peace and security.

It is a great honour for me to address this body just one day after presenting my credentials to the Secretary-General. I would like to join other speakers in thanking Mr. Michael Williams, the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing today and to pay tribute to him for all that he has accomplished in the course of a long and distinguished career at the United Nations.

There have been a number of significant events and developments in the Middle East in recent months. We welcome in particular the convening of the summit meetings between the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority that have taken place since July. These meetings have contributed to the establishment of a good atmosphere conducive to further dialogue on the whole range of issues of mutual concern. The international community should make its best efforts to maintain this momentum and promote this dialogue.

I would like to affirm that Japan remains fully committed to engaging actively in the peace process and to providing the utmost tangible support to President Abbas, the legitimate leader of the Palestinian Authority, and to the new Government led by Prime Minister Fayyad in their endeavours to achieve peace. We recognize that the only way toward the achievement of peace in the Middle East is to foster coexistence and co-prosperity between Israel and Palestine.

It was to these ends that the Government of Japan announced, on the occasion of the visit in mid-August of our Foreign Minister to Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories, its decision to provide a new package of assistance, valued at over $20 million. It consists of $11.2 million in direct financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority and $9.3 million in food aid, medicine and other humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian territories. Japan will consider further assistance to the Palestinian Authority for the purpose of building a self-sustaining Palestinian economy.

In this connection, Japan has been advancing the concept of the corridor for peace and prosperity, to which the representative of Bangladesh kindly referred a few minutes ago. It is development plan aimed at contributing to the creation of a viable Palestinian economy based on developing the private sector by establishing an agro-industrial park in the West Bank and facilitating the transportation of goods from the West Bank through Jordan, mainly to the Gulf States.

On 15 August, Japan's Foreign Minister organized the second ministerial-level meeting of the Four-Party Consultative Unit in Jericho, in the West Bank, with the participation of Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Livni of Israel, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Mr. Erakat, and Foreign Minister Khatib of Jordan. At the meeting, an agreement was reached on the building of an agro-industrial park in the southern part of the Jericho governorate.

The parties welcomed the initiative as a catalyst to confidence-building between the parties concerned. For instance, Foreign Minister Livni made a remark to the effect that the visits to Jericho in quick succession by the Prime Minister and then the Foreign Minister of Israel were a symbolic indication of the very beginning of normalization between Israel and Palestine. Mr. Erakat said, for his part, that the concept of the corridor for peace and prosperity could help to give the Palestinians a future.

Japan believes that in order to promote the peace process, it is critically important for Palestinians to maintain hope for the future. It is therefore appropriate that we should address the problem from both the political and economic perspective, in parallel.

While there are such encouraging developments, much remains to be done. Among the subjects that must be taken up are improving security, problems associated with the settlements and the security barrier in the West Bank, easing movement and access, continuing the transfer of tax and customs revenues, and releasing the Israeli soldier abducted by Hamas as well as a greater number of Palestinian prisoners being held in Israel. It is also essential to restore unity to the

West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to realize the shared goal of a two-State solution. Moreover, the involvement of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in the peace process is of critical importance. Japan strongly urges both the Israeli and Palestinian sides to redouble their efforts toward these ends.

In the view of the series of important international gatherings scheduled this year, Japan for its part will continue to play a proactive role in advancing the peace process in cooperation with its partners in the international community, taking into full account all parallel good offices efforts, including those of the relevant Arab countries, to advance the Arab Peace Initiative.

Before concluding, Mr. President, let me touch briefly upon the situation in Lebanon. Japan supports the efforts of the Lebanese Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Siniora, to achieve stability in Lebanon. We hope the concerned parties and factions in the country will engage in efforts to promote stability and reconstruction through dialogue and without resort to violence.

There remain many challenges in Lebanon that must be addressed in order to achieve full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and stabilization of the situation. A permanent ceasefire and long-term solution require that the international community tackle vigorously tasks including an arms embargo, the disarming and disbanding of all remaining militias and the delineation of the borders. We are deeply concerned that the two Israeli soldiers abducted by Hizbollah have not been returned and that in fact no proof of life has been provided.

A comprehensive peace that includes both a Lebanese and Syrian track is the only way to achieve permanent peace in the region. From that point of view, Japan expects Syria to play an active role in the realization of regional peace and stability.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to thank Mr. Michael Williams for his briefing on the situation and the latest developments in the Middle East region in the grip of endless conflicts and tensions that are sharpening daily.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statements made by the representatives of Yemen, Cuba and Pakistan on behalf of the countries members of the Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively.

It is clear from Mr. Williams' statement that peace and stability have unfortunately not found their way in this tormented and torn region, the consequence of decades of occupation and repression of populations desperately seeking emancipation, liberty and dignity. Equally clear to us is the correlation that exists between the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the other Arab lands occupied by Israel, and the climate of instability and tension in the region.

The heart of the problem, and its Gordian knot, is nothing other than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, through its regional extension, has disturbed existing balances by maintaining hotbeds of tension throughout the Middle East.

Part of the problem can also be found in the approach that is aimed at delinking purely security aspects from the incomplete political process, and that has considerably delayed the resumption of the positive dynamic that had been sketched out in favour, in particular, of the reactivation last March of the Arab peace plan.

Algeria remains in solidarity with the fraternal Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their historical, inalienable and fundamental rights, in particular that of seeing the return of its refugees scattered far and wide.

We also support unreservedly the objective of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, with the first stone of the global edifice being the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State with a territory with a single owner coexisting with Israel in peace and security.

This labour of peace that we all wholeheartedly call for is, however, fundamentally threatened at its roots and throughout its reach because of the repeated attempts by Israel to cause this march of time to deviate from its initial trajectory in order to maintain the status quo. If that is not the case, how else can one explain Israel's energetic undermining of even the slightest attempts at institution-building within a Palestinian Authority by presenting it as the cause of the freeze in the peace process, if it is not through its avowed will to put off indefinitely any configuration of

a future agreement on the final status of a future Palestinian State.

The proposal by the American Government to reactivate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by convening an international conference on peace in the Middle East in an attempt to consider as a whole the factors for the freeze seems to us, by itself, to be a wise approach, as long as it does not become a court judging whether the Palestinian Authority has the ability to establish democratic institutions and as long as it lays out in clear terms the outlines of definitive solution for this conflict that has lasted too long.

In order to be effective and lasting, this peace will also have to be found through an in-depth consideration of the means likely to put an end to the crisis resulting from the occupation of Iraq, with respect for its sovereignty, its territorial integrity and its unity. We also think that the cessation of violence in that fraternal country should be accompanied by a clear political timelines, with a clear and respected deadline for withdrawal.

Moreover, Algeria feels that the initiative would gain credibility if it involved all the parties directly concerned and were accompanied by a firm commitment by the international community to exert pressure on Israel to induce it to cooperate actively with the international community. The initiative in question should not make us forget that similar attempts in the past have failed when confronted with Israel's determination to impose systematically and by force its vision of peace and its interpretation of the map of the Middle East. It is instructive to note in this respect the fate of the various laboriously negotiated peace plans that received broad support from the international community but that came up against the intransigence of Israel and its delay tactics. The example of the Arab Peace Initiative, which involves a strict application of international law and of United Nations resolutions, is indicative of Israel's lack of political will to seek peace. Indeed, although this plan has been described as an essential basis for any future solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict, its positive momentum has given way, five years after its adoption in Beirut, to a disturbing pessimism.

Algeria calls on the international community to display greater coherence, to do everything possible to put the peace process back on track and to encourage Israel to abandon its intransigence and its policy of fait accompli by embarking upon serious negotiations with its Arab neighbours. We must acknowledge that there cannot be security without peace and that there is no peace under colonization.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Danesh-Yazdi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin, Mr. President, by thanking you for having convened this meeting today and congratulating you for your skilful stewardship of the Council's work this month. I would like to avail my delegation of this chance to thank Mr. Michael Williams for the job that he has done for our Organization and also for his briefing to the Council today. I wish him all the best in his new endeavours.

As the realities on the ground well indicate, and as reported to the Council today, throughout the period under review the Israeli war machine has continued its work brutally and relentlessly, shattering the lives and livelihoods of the defenseless Palestinian people. Even in the past several days, as the Palestinian people and Muslims across the globe were observing the 38th anniversary of the Israeli arson of Al-Aqsa mosque in the holy city of Al Quds Al Sharif, the Israeli regime continued with its carnage against the Palestinian people, killing many, among them women and children, in Khan Younis, Beit Hanoun, Nablus and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The appalling crimes of extrajudicial killings and targeted assassinations committed by the Israeli regime have continued unabated, while other Israeli crimes such as the destruction of homes, infrastructure and agricultural lands, the illegal expansion of settlements, the detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, the construction of the expansionist wall and the imposition of collective punishment on the entire Palestinian population have persisted.

Numerous United Nations documents have reported that, owing to Israeli practices, the whole Palestinian population has been terrorized, their properties have been destroyed and a humanitarian crisis has been imposed on a whole population. United Nations rapporteurs have rightly described these brutal Israeli practices and policies as ethnic cleansing. Moreover, as a result of the Israeli regime's blockade of the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian and economic situation there has deteriorated to a dangerous extent.

On 9 August 2007, the United Nations warned that Gaza could face an economic meltdown with "disastrous consequences" unless its main crossings were reopened. In this regard, the deputy chief of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East warned that "Gaza risks becoming a virtually 100 per cent aid-dependent, closed down and isolated community within a matter of months or weeks, if the present regime of closure continues."

It is therefore high time for the international community to urgently weigh in, in order to counter the Israeli regime's inhumane policies and practice of imposing humanitarian disaster on the defenseless Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere in the Palestinian territories. It is indeed unfortunate that while the Israeli regime has grown more brazen at every turn in committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Security Council, because of the unqualified support rendered to the Israeli regime by the United States of America, has remained incapacitated and unable to take any meaningful action to counter those atrocities.

A particular reference should also be made to the Israeli regime's concealment and unabated pursuit of a nuclear arsenal during the past several decades. The Israeli Prime Minister's acknowledgement of his regime's unlawful possession of nuclear weapons in his interview with a German television channel on 11 December 2006 revealed the real nature of the regime's clandestine nuclear activities, which pose a serious and continuing threat to international and regional peace and security.

It is undisputable that nuclear weapons in the hands of a regime marked by their long catalogue of various crimes, such State terrorism, aggression and occupation, present a real threat to regional and international peace and security. This therefore require urgent and decisive action by the Security Council. Indeed, this regime should face a united front and must be kept under continuous pressure to cease its terrorist acts, relinquish its nuclear programme and place all its nuclear facilities under international monitoring.

The Israeli regime has persisted in its aggressive policies towards Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan. A year has passed since the Israeli regime attacked Lebanon. According to United Nations special rapporteurs, "serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law had been committed by Israel" during its aggression against Lebanon. They also reported that:

> "Israel's Air Force attacked more than 7,000 targets in Lebanon, its Navy conducted 2,500 bombardments, and its Army fired tens of thousands of shells and rockets. As a result, 1,191 people were killed and more than 4,000 wounded. One third of the dead and wounded and close to half of the internally displaced persons were children. Tens of thousands of homes and much public infrastructure were damaged or destroyed. An estimated 1 million persons were displaced and entire villages were virtually destroyed."

In addition to these figures, their report indicates that the Israeli regime attacked medical facilities and hospitals.

The regime, in yet another show of its contempt for Security Council resolutions, is now adamantly violating resolution 1701 (2006) on a daily basis, including through violations of Lebanese airspace.

The aforementioned examples of persistent Israeli crimes and atrocities attest to the fact that the regime has based its policies and practices on occupation, aggression and bloodshed, and that its mischievous calls and expressions of readiness for peace with the Palestinians are but a malicious smokescreen to buy time and create division among the Palestinians and the countries in the region, in order to pursue its wicked expansionist policies and criminal practices against the Palestinians and other Arabs under its brutal occupation and oppression.

The Palestinian people, backed by the entire international community, in particular the Muslim and Arab world, will indeed continue to be resolute and unwavering in their efforts towards the attainment of their inalienable rights. In this context, the Palestinian factions should put the national aspirations of the Palestinian people ahead of their political differences and join hands to end the occupation of their homeland and restore their nation's denied and inalienable right.

We have repeatedly rejected the internal clashes in the Palestinian territories and have invited all Palestinian groups to work for national reconciliation and to settle their differences through dialogue on the basis of inclusion and cooperation, rather than exclusion and confrontation. If history is any guide,

efforts by any faction in Palestine to exclude others are doomed to fail. Hamas, which came to power through an election that the whole international community recognized as fair, free and democratic, and as a party with a deep popular base among the Palestinian people, cannot be excluded. Nor can Fatah be neglected, with its long history of resistance against occupation and its popularity among the Palestinian people.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has constantly expressed its concern over the dire consequences of the sanctions and blockade imposed by certain quarters against the Palestinian people for exercising their democratic rights. Sadly, the international community's failure to address the Palestinians' genuine cause, and the flagrant interference of certain Powers in internal Palestinian affairs, has led to the recent unfortunate events.

The Palestinian question indeed lies at the heart of the Middle East crisis. Undoubtedly, a durable peace in Palestine and the Middle East will only be possible through justice, full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, an end to discrimination and to the occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, the return of all Palestinian refugees and a democratic mechanism through which all the inhabitants of Palestine, as well as Palestinians driven out of their homeland, would have the possibility to determine their future in a democratic and peaceful fashion.

Before I conclude, I would like to place on the record that my delegation rejects the baseless allegations raised against my country in the Council today by the representative of the Israeli regime. Those are but preposterous — and, indeed, tired — practices to distract the international community's attention from the criminal policies and abhorrent practices and atrocities of the Israeli regime in Palestine and elsewhere in the region. It is evident that no amount of slander, deception of smear campaigns by the Israeli regime can cloud the obvious fact that that regime poses the most real, serious and urgent threat faced by the region and the world today, and should be countered urgently by the international community.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Zainuddin** (Malaysia): On behalf of my delegation, allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the able manner in which you have presided over the Security Council during the month of August. I also wish to thank you for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. This debate allows countries not represented in the Council to address critical issues affecting international peace and security, including the question of Palestine.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In June of this year, we marked 40 years of occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel. The Palestinian territories have been occupied for too long. In fact, this is the longest period in history that any territory has been occupied. It is more than imperative that a just solution be found to this issue. This very Council has adopted various resolutions aimed at addressing this issue, including resolution 242 (1967) and resolution 338 (1973). Unfortunately, a solution is far from sight, and even elusive. The situation on the ground in the occupied territories has deteriorated so much that major parts of it have literally descended into darkness. Palestinians continue to live in hardship, deprived of the amenities of a decent life, both economically and socially.

In that regard, we support efforts that aim to seek a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, including the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet process and the United States initiative to convene an international conference on the Middle East in Washington in November of this year. We also encourage the promotion of inter-Palestinian national reconciliation.

The question of Palestine remains the main factor dividing East and West and represents the bulk of the underlying reasons for the conflict and instability in the Middle East, including international terrorism. As a body that is mandated to deal with issues affecting international peace and security, the Council is duty-bound to take the necessary measures to prevent further deterioration of this issue.

The Council has adopted important resolutions on the question of Palestine, which should serve as the logical starting point for the restoration of Palestinian rights. It is also only right and fitting for the Council to assume the responsibility to compel Israel to respect

international law and conventions, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and put an end to Israel's occupation and illegitimate practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Council must ensure that Israel ceases its practices of expanding the illegal settlements in the West Bank, constructing the separation wall and maintaining its widespread network of roadblocks and checkpoints. Israel must also withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories to its pre-1967 borders.

Our hope is that a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine will be found in the nearest future. We also hope for the realization of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State, living side-by-side with Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Israel has requested the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Carmon** (Israel): I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for their patience. I would like for a moment to briefly clarify for the record an important factual matter referred to earlier today. However, I wish first to underscore that my delegation values the time and patience of the members of the Council. As such, we will not respond to the aggressive and offensive anti-Israel rhetoric used by the representatives of some Member States, in particular — and not surprisingly so — that of the representatives of Syria and Iran. That rhetoric was offensive not only to Israel, but also to the Security Council.

The matter I would like to raise is one of facts and substance. In that connection, I am referring in particular to the respectable Lebanese Ambassador's statement earlier today, where he referred to Israel's refusal — in the context of the Secretary-General's appointment of a facilitator in the matter of the abducted Israeli soldiers — to

> "solve the long-standing issue of the Lebanese detainees who have been ageing in Israeli prisons for decades". (*S/PV.5736, (Resumption 1)*)

First, those detainees are not innocent bystanders languishing in Israeli prisons; rather, they are murderous terrorists with blood on their hands who have very cruelly and unjustly taken the lives of innocent Israelis in terror attacks over the years. Indeed, one of those terrorists is Samir Kuntar, who in 1979 landed a rubber boat off the coast of Nahariya, a city on the northern coast of Israel, and carried out a vicious terror attack on the Haran family. Samir Kuntar shot the father, Danny Haran, in the head, and smashed the daughter's head with his rifle. The mother of the family, Smadar Haran, who was hiding under a crawlspace with her infant daughter, smothered her baby while trying to keep her quiet and save their lives.

Men like Samir Kuntar are not simple prison detainees; they are murderous terrorists who, if not in a prison cell, would continue to intimidate, maim and murder Israelis. Full-fledged due process of law was carried out. Samir Kuntar and the others in the group were lawfully accused and convicted for their crimes.

Secondly, for a good reason, resolution 1701 (2006), as well as the report (S/2007/392) of the Secretary-General on its implementation, do not make an equation between the abducted Israeli soldiers and Hizbollah terrorists. In fact, those terrorists are in good condition and receive the appropriate care reserved for detainees as a consequence of war. They have also been accorded standard due process. That includes visits by the Red Cross and other agencies, appropriate medical care, contacts with their families and so on. Yet, nothing is known of the abducted Israeli soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. It is therefore baffling that a respected ambassador could even insinuate a comparison between the terrorist criminals serving their terms in an Israeli prison and the abducted Israeli soldiers, whose conditions and whereabouts are unknown. There can be no equation of the plight of the Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hizbollah with that of the terrorists arrested for and convicted of acts of terror or that of those detained as a result of the hostilities.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I regret having to speak again before the Council at this late hour. However, with his last statement, the Israeli representative left me with no choice other than to reply. I will not speak at length, but will focus on only the following points.

As members are well aware, the Israeli policy of occupation and aggression since the establishment of the United Nations has been the focus of great efforts and energy on the part of the entire international community, particularly in the Security Council, to put an end to that policy of occupation and aggression,

which has lasted too long. I need not recall the various reports prepared by Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations on all the aspects of that policy; even the Special Rapporteur on the right to food has criticized the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. It also goes without saying that the Human Rights Commission in Geneva has condemned Israel's barbaric and bloody conduct dozens of times and that the Human Rights Council, successor to the Human Rights Commission, was convened, only a few hours after it had been established, in an emergency meeting to investigate Israel's barbaric and criminal practices in Gaza and Lebanon last July.

In addition, I wish to recall that Israel introduced nuclear weapons to the region decades ago and is opposed to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Moreover, the first hijacking operation in recent history was committed by Israel in 1954, and it was a Syrian aircraft that was hijacked. There is only one kind of terrorism in the region: the State terror of Israel.

No matter how hard Israel's representatives try, either in the Security Council or elsewhere, to conceal the barbaric aspects of their occupation of other peoples' lands, they will not succeed in concealing one fact: the international community has voted more than 1,000 times against Israel and its barbaric policy of occupying others' territories — a policy that it carries out in total disregard for international law and humanitarian law.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Indonesia has asked for the floor. I call on him.

**Mr. Budiman** (Indonesia): My delegation would like to respond to the statement made by the representative of Israel this morning.

The war last summer in southern Lebanon brought agony to both parties, but it caused human casualties among the Lebanese. Many of those casualties were among civilians, and their immediate physical cause was an incomparably appalling series of Israeli offensives during the war.

The current security and stability in southern Lebanon has been made possible by the decisive response of the Security Council through the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), which, inter alia, strengthened the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Indonesia underlines the importance of compliance by all parties with resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety. We also stress the urgent need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon.

**The President** (*spoke in French*). I now give the floor to Mr. Michael Williams to respond to comments made during the debate.

**Mr. Williams:** It is late in the afternoon, and I will not keep my colleagues for long. But I am grateful to the Council for giving me the opportunity to say a few more words.

First, let me say how grateful I am for the comments that have been made about me personally, particularly with regard to my work on Council resolution 1701 (2006) and, more recently, as United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. I deeply appreciated those remarks, which came from very many delegations.

With regard to the first Security Council resolution, resolution 1701 (2006), I would like to take this opportunity to commend the commitment of both Governments — the Government of Israel and the Government of Lebanon — to that resolution. I think both have worked extremely hard to avoid any renewal of hostilities along their common border. And it is only because of that commitment that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has been able to operate in southern Lebanon and to provide security on Israel's northern border — security that has been elusive for very many years, if not decades.

Last Friday, before I left Israel at the end of another regional tour, my last conversation was with Karnit Goldwasser, the wife of one of the two abducted Israeli soldiers. Members will recall that the cause of the war last summer was the abduction of those soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. I have to say with deep personal regret — because I have made very considerable efforts in this regard — that, more than 13 months after their abduction, we still cannot establish proof of life. I do not even say the release and repatriation of the prisoners; I say proof of life. And I urge those Member States that have relations with Hizbollah to urge that group to meet the basic humanitarian standard that proof of life of prisoners should always be presented.

I am sad to be leaving the United Nations. That sadness is diminished by the fact that, throughout this long debate, signs of hope were alluded to by delegations from all corners of the globe: the appointment of Tony Blair as Quartet Special Envoy; the meeting called by the United States for November this year; the Arab Peace Initiative, which stemmed from the summit held in Riyadh in March; and, perhaps above all, the dialogue that has been taking place between Prime Minister and President Abbas, with the most recent meeting having taken place yesterday. I think all of these give us hope that, with good will and political courage — and it will require real political courage — we may be able to move forward on the Israeli-Palestinian peace track and towards a just and comprehensive peace throughout the region.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.*